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ANALYSIS OF RECREATION CONDITION AND MANAGEMENT NEEDS OF THE IDAHO CITY RANGER DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT GUIDE

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Title: Analysis of Recreation Condition and Management Needs of the Idaho City Ranger District

Abstract: The Idaho City Ranger District of the Boise National Forest has traditionally been a commodity producing district. With little emphasis, recreation opportunities have occurred as a result of use and limited site specific planning. The current situation has culminated from years of re-active recreation development with no long term planning or overall recreation goals to guide this activity.

In an effort to provide emphasis and direction to existing and future recreation opportunities, this report analyzes and evaluates current facilities utilizing the draft "Process for Analyzing Future Management of Public Sector Developed Sites on the Boise National Forest".

Recommendations are made based on this information and direction provided by the current Land Use Plan, Idaho City Planning Unit, and the Boise National Forest Plan. It provides a framework for the Idaho City Ranger District to define its Future Desired Condition in relation to Forest Plan recreation goals.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Summary: The Idaho City Ranger District has historically been a commodity producing district, which has resulted in haphazard; sporadic recreational development and opportunities. Developed sites constructed in the 1950's and 60's were the cornerstone of the recreation program. The majority of other recreational opportunities have all piggybacked off timber sale activity and related roads.

Recreation under the multiple use concept, never received any emphasis under the previous Boise National Forest Land Use Plan 1975, and was re-active in nature.

In the Forest Plan, a conscious effort is made to balance multiple use concepts and reflects a stronger emphasis on non commodity resources, including fish, wildlife, watershed and recreation.

To prepare for these changes a review of Recreation philosophy and management was required to inform the line officer and district staff about recreation. Once a baseline was established it was possible to evaluate the current condition of the recreation program and make recommendations for future development of opportunities.

Utilizing recent publications on recreation trends (*1), census data and population projections (*2), recreation goals, objectives, and future desired conditions as stated in the Boise National Forest Plan, a framework was developed to analyze and evaluate existing recreational facilities and programs. It provides the guidelines to direct future program development to meet projected public needs and future desired condition for Recreation on the Idaho City Ranger District.

*1- Presidents Commission on Americans Outdoors, December 1986

*2- R-4, Recreation and Wildlife Workshop, May 1989

The results of evaluation indicated the closing of six developed sites containing 3 to 5 units each. The expansion of three developed sites for 16 additional units, resulted in a total unit reduction of 8% (82 units versus 89 units) The results expressed would increase cost efficiency in maintenance and administration and create little inconvenience to the public. (Some relocation to other developed sites with low occupancy might occur as the few developed sites with high occupancy rates actually reach capacity.)

Analysis based on the following criteria; reduced resource damage, improved management efficiency, and better met recreation demands, provided for the following recommendation:

Eliminate six developed sites containing 33 units.

Rehabilitate/expand five developed sites to provide a total of 82 units.

Develop conceptual plans for new developed facilities and ultimate build out of recreation corridors, four to five potential campground sites, boat launch/take out, and trailhead sites.

Develop dispersed area management plans for the recreation corridors which would specifically address vegetation management, wildlife habitat, vehicle traffic control, and signing (both interpretive and administrative).

Adopt an active "Good Neighbor" recreation resource management policy with the State, County and local governments as well as with private enterprises and private landholders.

The recommendations stated here are a start to developing and implementing a comprehensive recreation program and should be evaluated periodically to be sure that they are meeting public needs while protecting the resource values.

ANALYSIS OF RECREATION CONDITION AND MANAGEMENT NEEDS OF THE IDAHO CITY RANGER DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The Boise National Forest Supervisor's Office has directed its district recreation staffs to evaluate their developed recreation sites to determine if public needs and national objectives are being met under current management conditions. The Idaho City Ranger District decided to expand their evaluation to include dispersed and developed aspects of recreation management on the district. The goal of this document is to formulate a plan enabling the Idaho City Ranger District to meet the recreation demand for the district in a cost effective manner while protecting the basic resources of the land and supporting a viable local economy.

National direction emphasizes that the Forest Service will be responsive to evolving customer needs for recreation in a cost effective manner while protecting traditional resource values. The difficulty of this task almost guarantees that careful analysis of recreation demand and current management techniques will discover misdirected efforts requiring changes in some of those techniques. Since any management decision effecting the status quo runs the risk of disturbing people who are comfortable or familiar with current conditions, it is reasonable to assume that there are recreationists using the Idaho City area who will be very concerned about modification of current management practices. This document analyzes the current situation and proposes changes needed to meet existing and projected recreation demand under current and expected budget restraints.

BACKGROUND

Recreation Philosophy and Forest Service Recreation Management Policy

The basic goals of the Forest Service are caring for the land and serving people, a primary objective of Forest Service management activities is to protect the resources: the soil, the water, and the associated flora and fauna. While Pinchott's multiple-use philosophy has often been touted as a directive requiring use of the productive capacity of the land, his "Greatest good for the greatest number over the long run." is a clear caveat that use is only productive when it can be sustained indefinitely. In other words, use is wise use only if it protects the basic resources.

All too often there is conflict between utilization of forest products and protection of the land's ability to produce those or other products. Timber harvest sometimes damages the soil and it almost always impacts the visual environment. Wilderness designation often reduces the timber base. Mining permanently alters the landscape. The challenge of managing National Forest lands, is finding ways to utilize forest products while protecting the land's ability to produce a sustained yield of all forest outputs.

One of the basic principles of ecology is often stated as, "Everything is connected to everything else." It is useful to remember this principle when attempting to analyze the current status of recreation on the Idaho City Ranger District. The physiography of the district has indeed provided a myriad of recreational opportunities that the local population is sociologically predisposed to appreciate, but does the fact that the people of Idaho like outdoor recreation and the fact that much outdoor recreation is occurring in the district prove that the Forest Service is doing a good job of recreation management? What is the cause and what is the effect? Is the recreation occurring because of Forest Service management techniques that enhance the recreational opportunities, or because of the district's combination of geography and weather? Is the close proximity to Boise the most important factor influencing recreation use; or are the roads built primarily for timber access, but used for recreational access, the determinate factor? What are the variables effecting recreation opportunities and how are they related to other Forest Service management goals? In other words, is the Idaho City district providing valuable recreational experiences because of resource management practices or in spite of them and if it is in spite of them, what changes need to be made?

Modern psychological study has demonstrated that the common theme of recreational activities is variety. One of the main characteristics of a recreational activity is that it tends to be a change from the routine habits of work and homelife. Few people enjoy their work so much that they do the exact same things on their vacations that they do at work. Urbanites tend to go to the beach or to the mountains when seeking outdoor recreation and rural dwellers often journey to an exotic environment of a National Park. Outdoor recreation, however, has never been the only choice available and today the modern recreationist has a veritable cornucopia of possible recreational opportunities to choose from. An urbanite might as easily decide to travel to Paris or Cancun and a resident of a small town might save up to go to the World Series or the Super Bowl. Does the desire to go to the Super Bowl exist because the Super Bowl exists, or does the Super Bowl exist because the desire exists? Which comes first, the desire or the activity? The chicken or the egg? As interesting as that question might be to social scientists, it is not as important to the Forest Service as it might be because of another phenomena documented by science. Recreation researchers have demonstrated what we all know intuitively - one recreational activity is more or less substitutable for another. Will I work in the garden this Saturday or will I go fishing? My final decision will depend on what I have been doing recently, what the weather has been like, whether the fish have been biting (or whether they were biting the last time I went fishing), and what other opportunities are available nearby. If there are no streams nearby, or if the kids want to go to the new amusement park that just opened, I may end up not doing any fishing or gardening! This substitutability of one recreational activity for another means that the Forest Service does not have to consider providing the entire spectrum of recreational opportunities and can concentrate on activities that focus on the natural environment. To a certain extent, the Forest Service can, by providing one type of recreational opportunity and ignoring others, create its own demand.

Resources available to any one individual or group of individuals for recreational purposes are usually limited. There is never as much time and money available to spend on recreation as there might be. As a consequence, availability or opportunity influences the type of recreation chosen. Most people snow ski in the winter and watch baseball in the summer. (Of course, Donald Trump could buy two baseball teams and have them play each other in January in Idaho City's new sports pavillion if he so desired, but his situation is the exception!)

People in Boise are more likely to conclude that their opportunity to watch bison graze in Yellowstone is greater than their opportunity to watch a professional football game and that perception of availability will effect their choice of recreational activities.

People in the Idaho City area considering outdoor recreation opportunities have choices to make. Do I spend the day 4-wheeling or do I drive on to Stanley? Do I explore the mining areas or hike into the Sawtooth Wilderness? Individual recreation decisions depend on personal preference, opportunity or availability, cost, time of year, and many other factors not discussed above (fads, mood, personal history, state of the economy, and even international diplomacy, for example), but the institutional variable most affected by Forest Service management practices is opportunity.

Just as individuals have limited resources to use in pursuing recreation, the Forest Service is expected to meet customer demand for commodity and non-commodity forest outputs in a cost efficient manner.

For recreation, this means considering partnerships with private entities, setting fees so that users of services pay for them, reducing operating costs of recreation facilities, and carefully considering the opportunity costs of investments in recreation. When allocating scarce resources in recreation management, the Forest Service must first consider the broader, general strategic considerations listed in Table 1, below. The more detailed, on-the-ground tactical considerations necessary to implement the strategic plans are discussed on pages 10 and 11.

TABLE 1 STRATEGIC RECREATION MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

* Protect the basic resources
* Provide variety of recreation opportunities
* Public education
* Prepare for future demand
* Operate efficiently
* Support local economies

RECREATION MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS

For planning purposes the recreation program on the district was divided into two segments: concentrated recreation use and dispersed recreation use. The concentrated use areas include what is usually called developed site recreation areas, but in this case includes some dispersed activities as well. The dispersed recreation management areas are the areas of the district that have a lower concentration of recreation use and, while they may include some developed sites, as a generalization require less intensive management. This report concentrates on the high use areas and provides only a cursory analysis of the recreation use and management recommendations for the dispersed areas.

CONCENTRATED RECREATION USE AREAS ANALYSIS

The geographic and sociologic characteristics of the district are such that the management situation is most easily addressed if the concentrated recreation use areas of the district are divided into two corridors: the North Fork of the Boise River valley, and along State Highway 21. The two corridors are very different in their geography and use patterns and will be discussed in detail separately, but there are strategic similarities that will be investigated first.

Both the Highway 21 and the North Fork corridors are currently experiencing some degree of resource damage. Some of this damage is the continuing legacy of historic abuse, but some is the result of current management (or lack of management) of recreation use. Both areas offer a variety of recreational experiences and provide ample opportunities for improved management. Mores Creek, along Highway 21, and the North Fork are both important riparian areas of high interest to the public. Highway 21 because it is a well-traveled route into the mountains and the North Fork because it is a destination area in itself. Future management of these areas needs to protect the health and vigor of these riparian ecosystems.

Highway 21 runs through a formerly active mining area that still contains the highest population density in the district. This historic area provides a unique opportunity for the Forest Service to educate the populace about the multiple-use philosophy of management. The visitor center at Idaho City is a golden opportunity to reach large numbers of people while they are traveling through the district. The Forest Service must develop plans to capitalize on the opportunities Highway 21 brings.

The close proximity of Boise to the Idaho City district means that demand for recreational activities within both corridors will continue to increase as the population of Boise grows (1973- 55,700 RVDS, 1989- 140,000 RVDS). Boise based recreationists will place more demand on day-use activities than would be expected if the city were not so near (38 miles to Idaho City). Management of recreational opportunities must anticipate the changes that increased population will bring.

The time when the Forest Service could take a generous budgetary approach to resource management activities no longer exists. The new National Recreation Strategy approach puts a premium on cooperative ventures and other innovative approaches that stretch Forest Service funds and gain operational efficiency. Compilation of this report is an effort by the Idaho City district to take a "bottom line" approach to recreation management. As a result of reduced budgets and evaluating ways in which we do business, management efficiency will take its place next to resource protection and serving the public as the fundamental principles underlying all other activities.

Nationally, the Forest Service is encouraged by Congress to help support the economies of the local communities dependent on forest products. Traditionally the Forest Service has done a good job of supplying a sustained yield of wood products to the local industries, but today's economy demands a broader approach that recognizes the changing character of the national and world economy. Wood products may always be important to Idaho, but tourism is a growing industry that will continue to increase in importance as the population of the state and country increases.

Idaho City is the logical place to concentrate efforts to bolster tourism. The historic sights, the major highway, the nearby recreational opportunities, and the private sector support facilities already in place have brought the area to that awkward point just below the "critical mass" necessary to produce an economic explosion ignited by recreation. Proper public and private sector investment in recreational opportunities along Highway 21 will allow Idaho City to capture a larger portion of the tourist industry's dollars by becoming a secondary destination point in its own right. Public and private neglect, on the other hand, will continue the current economic stagnation.

Detailed analysis of existing or anticipated conditions on the Idaho City Ranger District follow.

NORTH FORK BOISE RIVER

CONCENTRATED USE CORRIDOR

The North Fork Boise River is located wholly within the boundaries of the Idaho City Ranger District. Eighteen miles of the river are considered floatable during at least a portion of the season and the river is relatively heavily used for camping, picnicking, fishing, and "exploring". The whole river valley is a valuable recreation resource protected in the draft Forest Plan against significant changes in its scenic qualities. The Plan also requires preparation of a management plan specifically addressing the recreation opportunities along the river, and recommends portions of the North Fork of the Boise River for both Wild and Recreational river eligibility.

TABLE 2 TACTICAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NORTH FORK BOISE RIVER CORRIDOR

Resource Condition
* Damage to streamside vegetation
* Visual clutter as viewed from road and river
* Sedimentation and pollution of river
* Wildlife habitat

Providing Diversity of Recreational Experiences
* Full-service developed site camping
* Dispersed site camping
* Driving-for-pleasure experience
* Boating
* Wildlife viewing
* Nature study (botany, geology, entomology, etc.)
* Gathering forest products (berries, pine cones, etc.)

Cost of Management
* Administrative travel time
* Facility maintenance costs
* Vegetative management
* Visitor information
* Original investment cost

Trail Access
* Parking facilities
* Signing
* Separate campgrounds from trailheads

TABLE 2 TACTICAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS (CONT.)

Social Implications
* Proximity to Boise
* Public perception of management effort
* Recreation demand-What does the public want?
* Public support for management actions

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The current management style along the North Fork corridor could be described as laissez-faire, very little active management is taking place. Unmanaged recreation use impacts have accumulated over the years so that the current condition of the riparian vegetation is less than ideal. Recreation use is probably not heavy, but it is increasing, so any new management plans need to address the existing and anticipated impacts. One of the goals of a management plan should be a sustained yield of quality recreation experiences.

The developed campgrounds along the river were all designed in the late 1950's or early 1960's. They are ill-suited for today's recreational vehicle-based campers; most of the spurs are too short, many of the road curves are too sharp, and many of the unit facilities are inconveniently located. As a result of western pine beetle infestations several of the campgrounds are virtually without tree cover. The design and location of existing campgrounds needs to be re-evaluated with an eye on current conditions and use patterns in anticipation of future changes.

The river corridor is a destination area for many recreationists. Even though they would probably say they are going "fishing" or "camping", their recreation experience is really a combination of many aspects of their outing. The scenic views along the way to their fishing hole or camping spot, the wildlife glimpsed from their automobile window, the wildflowers, the wide-open spaces, all combine to make the experience one they want to repeat. All aspects of the recreation experience are currently being impacted to some degree by the recreationists themselves.

Examples of this is Idaho Fish and Game increasing the stocking numbers of fish and decreasing the intervals between stocking to maintain a recreational fishery in the North Fork of the Boise River. Identified Dispearsed recreation sites between Barber Flat and Deer Park Guard Stations have increased from 6 in 1973 to 24 in 1989. And finally vehicle traffic along the North Fork road has seen an increase in average weekend use from 10 vehicles per day to 60 vehicles per day.

TABLE 3. CAMPGROUNDS ON THE NORTH FORK BOISE RIVER

CAMPGROUND	NUMBER OF CAMP UNITS	FEE CHARGED	WATER	TOILETS	TREE COVER
Black Rock	11	NO	YES	YES	YES
Robert E. Lee	6	NO	NO	NO	NO
Deer Park	3	NO	NO	NO	YES
Four Mile	5	NO	NO	NO	NO
Johnson Creek	3	NO	NO	NO	NO
Graham Bridge	4	NO	NO	NO	NO
	32				

BLACK ROCK CAMPGROUND

Black Rock is the largest and the most aesthetically pleasing of the six developed sites along the North Fork Boise River. It is the most downstream of the developed campgrounds and thus has a longer season from a water-sports standpoint.

Black Rock Campground provides 33% of the developed camping units currently existing on the river. The percentage is high but the actual number of units is small and, unfortunately, the site does not appear to allow for any appreciable expansion of that number. However,rehabilitation of the campground might add two or three units.

ROBERT E. LEE CAMPGROUND

This campground may be one of the developed sites worth keeping. It is located near the upstream point where the road leaves the river valley, so it provides a good location for dispersing use along the river. With six camping units it is the second largest of the existing campgrounds. While the current condition of the vegetation within the site is less than ideal, a vegetative management plan could improve existing conditions enough to make rehabilitation of the site feasible.

DEER PARK and FOUR MILE CAMPGROUNDS

Deer Park and Four Mile have no real opportunity for expansion because of geographical location and proximity to the riparian zone.

Four Mile Campground is sandwiched between the road and the river and really appears to serve no purpose for today's campers.

JOHNSON CREEK AND GRAHAM BRIDGE CAMPGROUNDS

Both of these campgrounds are very small and, while located on the river, cannot be approached via the same road as the previously mentioned campgrounds. The only motorized access is over F.S. Road 312 which is over thirty miles in length, very rough, and signed as "Not Maintained For Public Use". Neither of the campgrounds appear to be geographically suited for expansion and their extreme remoteness contributes to high maintenance and operations costs regardless of the number of sites provided.

Johnson Creek Campground also serves as a trailhead providing access to the Sawtooth Wilderness Area. Eliminating the campground should have no significant impact on the area's function as a trailhead.

Graham Bridge Campground is located approximately one mile from the Graham Guard Station. The Guard Station may be included in the recreation rental program in the near future, so it should be considered as one of the recreation opportunities offered in the upper North Fork Boise River area.

Currently the use in this upper North Fork area is very light. Most recreationists there are probably seeking an undeveloped, dispersed-use experience. This isolated area is even being considered as an addition to the Sawtooth Wilderness.

BARBER FLATS

The geography of the valley is so rugged that this flat site is the only practical location for a large campground if one is needed. Its location midway along the roaded section of the river valley is also ideal for access to other recreation activities. Phased development would allow the gradual construction, a step at a time, until the ultimate capacity of 150 units is reached.

THE NORTH FORK RIVER

Streams and lakes are always the favorite recreation destinations in any given area. There seems to be something magical about water in the outdoors that enthralls recreationists. The North Fork is not a pristine mountain stream. It has been impacted by past timber and mining activities along its banks and within the watershed, but it is still a valuable resource. Most of the impacts visible to today's recreationist arise from recreation use, not commodity exploitation. The signs of man's activities in the form of intensive use and degraded vegetation are unmistakable, and manageable. The existing problems are not the result of neglect on the part of the public, they are the result of affection.

THE NORTH FORK RIVER ROAD

Driving for pleasure is one of the main recreational activities in any National Forest in any part of the country. The North Fork road receives its share of pleasure driving, approximately 2,000 RVDS/yr.

The scenic view from the road, even for those heading for a specific destination, is an important part of the experience provided by this recreation corridor. A view of cluttered campsites and trampled vegetation along the road is not what people come to the valley to see. Laissez-faire management of recreation use results in more damage to the view and vegetation than is necessary.

TRAILS

Four trails begin from the river road and most of them are poorly signed and have no parking areas associated specifically with the trail. Room for parking is usually no problem for the recreationists, however, generally the vehicles are merely driven off the roadway onto the vegetation.

NORTH FORK CORRIDOR

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To reduce resource damage, improve management efficiency, and better meet recreational user needs, the following actions are recommended:

* Eliminate the following Developed Sites:
  - Four Mile
  - Deer Park
  - Johnson Creek
  - Graham Bridge

* Rehabilitate the following sites:
  - Black Rock
  - Robert E. Lee

* Develop conceptual plans for new developed facilities
  - Barber Flat Campground (up to 150 units)
  - Boat launch/take out sites
  - Trailhead areas

* Develop Dispersed Area management plan
  - Plan and implement vegetative management plan
    - Enhance vegetation in developed sites
    - Improve visual quality of riparian zone
    - Protect dispersed area vegetation
  - Develop and implement wildlife habitat plan
    - Stream improvement
    - Wildlife habitat improvement
  - Develop traffic control plan
    - Roadway and dispersed sites
  - Develop Interpretive sign plan

The Idaho City Ranger District is spending too much money on small, inefficient campgrounds. (Most modern campgrounds contain at least 20 to 30 camp units.) Operational efficiency can be improved by eliminating the smallest developed recreation sites and consolidating management activities into fewer, larger sites. Converting the four smallest sites to undeveloped dispersed use parking areas should have a negligible effect on the overall recreation use in this corridor, because Black Rock and Robert E. Lee campgrounds contain over one-half of the developed units along the river, even without any rehabilitation work being done on them.

Rehabilitation of Black Rock and Robert E. Lee Campgrounds should reflect modern design criteria and seek to increase the number of units at each site. Modern facilities and increased vegetation management should improve the quality of the recreation experience.

Increased recreation use of the North Fork Corridor over the next 10 to 20 years should be anticipated. Conceptual management plans for ultimate "build-out" of the corridor need to be developed, including conceptual site plans for developed facilities (such as at Barber Flat) and dispersed recreation management plans. Recreation management should be pro-active instead of re-active.

Recreation use of the river corridor in the future will be so heavy as to require a more intensive management style than has been necessary in the past. That new management style should suggest rather than coerce, but it should protect the basic recreation resource.

STATE HIGHWAY 21

CONCENTRATED USE CORRIDOR

Any attempt to analyze the demand for recreation along the Highway 21 corridor should take the broad view of the whole length of the road from Boise to Lowman. The Forest Service has recognized the recreation value of the highway by proposing protection of the scenic vistas via restricted management prescriptions in the Boise National Forest Forest Plan. The Idaho Department of Transportation has designated Highway 21 as "The Ponderosa Pine Scenic Highway" and the Forest Service has begun action to include the road in its new National Scenic Byways Program.

Highway 21 has been gaining recognition as an important recreation area and with that increased recognition has come an increased emphasis on management. Table 4 lists some of the major factors effecting the management of recreation opportunities along the corridor.

TABLE 4. TACTICAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HIGHWAY 21 CONCENTRATED RECREATION USE CORRIDOR

*Resource Condition

- Damage of riparian areas
- Visual degradation
- Wildlife and fish habitat condition

*Recreation Opportunities

- Full-service developed site camping
- Dispersed camping
- Day-use picnicking areas
- Driving-for-pleasure
- Scenic vistas
- Historic interest areas
- Fishing and hunting
- Nature study and interpretive experiences
- Wildlife viewing
- "Outdoor action sports"
  - -hiking
  - -bicycling
  - -boating
  - -crosscountry skiing

TABLE 4. (continued)

Motorized trail riding
- trailbikes
- 4-wheelers
- snowmobilers
- off-highway-vehicles

Recreational mining/gold panning
Equestrian activities

*Cost of management

Administrative travel time
Facility maintenance costs
Vegetative management
Visitor information
Law enforcement
Cost of current investment

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Current management along the Highway Corridor might be described as "Catch as catch can". There are quite a few recreation facilities along the 72 miles of highway between Boise and Lowman (see Table 5, page 19), but they seem to have sprung into existence without any overall goal in mind. The five Forest Service campgrounds were designed in the late 1950's and have been only slightly modified since then. The winter trailheads are in their present locations largely because that is where the side roads are located that can be used as cross-country ski trails or snowmobile trails. This report is the first known effort to define the recreation potential of National Forest System Lands along Highway 21 in 25 years.

TABLE 5. HIGHWAY 21 CONCENTRATED RECREATION USE CORRIDOR DEVELOPED RECREATION FACILITIES

A. SUMMER SEASON

NAME	FACILITIES	FEE CHARGED
Discovery Park Picnic Area (State)	Picnic and swimming	YES
Pine Creek Campground (State)	10 Tent camp units	NO
Warm Springs Resort (Private)	22 R. V. Hookups	YES
	10 Tent camp units	YES
	2 Rental cabins	YES
	Picnic and swimming	YES
Grayback Campground	14 Camp units	YES
Bad Bear Campground	6 Camp units	YES
Ten Mile Campground	14 Camp units	YES
Hayfork Campground	6 Camp units	YES
Edna Creek Campground	9 Camp units	YES

B. WINTER SEASON

Warm Springs Resort (Private)	Swimming	YES
	2 Rental cabins	YES
Steamboat Gulch Tubing Area (State)	Snow play area	YES
Granite Creek	Snowmobile parking	NO
Buena Vista	Cross-country ski parking	NO
Whoop-Um-Up	Cross-country ski and Snowmobile parking	YES
Gold Fork	Cross-country ski parking	YES
Banner Ridge	Cross-country ski parking	YES

Whoop-Um-Up, Gold Fork and Banner Ridge are managed in cooperation with the State Park and Ski program.

HIGHWAY 21

Highway 21, as one of the major access routes into the Sawtooth National Recreation Area receives a considerable amount of traffic from recreationists. Presently most of these recreationists do not view the Idaho City area as a destination, at least not during the summer season. The fall and winter months result in a higher portion of destination users because of the hunting and winter sports opportunities.

The recreation experience provided by traveling Highway 21 from Boise to Lowman during the snow-free months is a varied one: open sagebrush covered hills near Boise, interesting volcanic geology in the first miles, a pretty mountain stream alongside the road for most of the way, evidence of historic mining activity around Idaho City, lovely Ponderosa Pine covered mountainsides, and inviting side roads leading off into the forest.

The value of these experiences, however, is marred in many places by the effects of man's activities: quaint mining towns are one thing, eroded hillsides, mining spoil piles, and muddy streams are another; lush vegetation and forests are one thing, trampled willows and cut-over hillsides another; picturesque campgrounds one thing, trailers pulled off at every side-road another. The highway provides a valuable recreation experience as it is, but its potential is so much greater. Warm Springs Resort, Idaho City's historic past, and the recreation opportunities in the adjacent National Forest compliment each other and can, if managed as a unit, synergistically develop into a recreational experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.

IDAHO CITY

Idaho City is the largest population center in the district and serves as a focal point for much of the motorized recreation in the area. Many of the access roads depart the paved road in the Idaho City area. The Visitor Center and the recreational vehicle sanitary dump station provide valuable services for summertime recreationists. The restaurants and stores currently provide support services valued by a significant portion of the recreating public.

Idaho City itself is an attraction for many recreationists; the old buildings along main street, the museum, and the old cemetery attract many visitors. The Gold Rush history and associated mining areas are of interest to many people and several of the favored access routes leading to the "old mines" go through Idaho City.

Winter sports activities have helped support the local economy during what is otherwise a slack time. The Buena Vista Ski Trail at the airport is a heavily used beginner ski trail and many Snowmobilers base their weekend excursions out of one of the two motels in town. A developed outdoor ice skating rink, with skate rentals through the Idaho City Chamber of Commerce has become very popular.

PERIPHERAL ACTIVITIES

The National Forest access via Highway 21 is open for all legal public recreation purposes. The winter-time activities of cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are popular in the lands surrounding the highway. The fact that most of the other roads in the district are not plowed for vehicle access increases the importance of the highway for winter recreation purposes. The state-run Park and Ski program (which facilitated the development of the cross-country ski trails along Highway 21 above Idaho City) is beginning to meet the need for easily accessible ski trails and the state Snowmachine registration funds are helping satisfy the demands of snowmobilers, but much still needs to be done.

Summertime produces a rush of people driving up Highway 21 to fish, birdwatch, photograph or just "get away from it all". Since there are few areas identified as especially suitable for any particular type of recreation activity, they usually have a difficult time finding a good location to pursue their interests. Recreationists have to pretty much fend for themselves.

Recreationists are increasing in number because of the aging of the baby boom generation. These older recreationists are looking for convenient access to areas suitable for their activities and their activities tend to be less "epic" than in years past. A "good workout" on a mountain bike or a snowmobile, or a nice area for a picnic are the sort of things recreationists are searching for today and they don't want to have to drive very far to find it. No doubt people are using the Highway 21 corridor for all types of recreational activities, but are less than ecstatic about what they are finding.

DEVELOPED FACILITIES
(CURRENT CONDITIONS)

GRAYBACK CAMPGROUND

Grayback Campground is one of the more aesthetically pleasing campgrounds along the Highway 21 Corridor. It also is the first campground out of Boise and it supplies 14 of the 59 public sector camp units available along the highway. The campground is located on a bench above Mores creek several hundred feet off Highway 21. The heavily wooded character of the site and its location away from the highway noise make it a desirable campground. The fact that the campground is only 2 miles from Idaho City and virtually across the street from Warm Springs Resort also increases its attractiveness.

The addition of a group camping facility to the existing camping area will increase the utility of the site.(More RVD's can be furnished at a lower maintenance and operational cost.)

The current campground facilities, which represent a considerable dollar investment, are in an adequate state of repair needing only routine maintenance and the development and implementation of a vegetative management plan to bring them up to standard.

GRANITE CREEK PARKING AREA

This parking area is located two miles north of Idaho City on National Forest land now withdrawn from mineral location. The area has been mined in the past and is in desperate need of reclamation. The area is pretty in winter when covered by snow, but looks like a wasteland at other times of the year.

Winter use as a staging area for snowmobilers utilizing the nearby trails is heavy since snowmobile parking is limited in the Idaho City area. Summer use as an overflow (or unmanaged) camping area is slight.

BAD BEAR CAMPGROUND

Bad Bear is located within the riparian zone and is spread out on both sides of the highway. The site is poorly designed for today's campers and camping equipment, presenting numerous problems in meeting the needs of the recreationists and protecting the environment. The aesthetics of the site itself, however, are pleasing and the facilities on the northwest side of the highway are certainly worth saving.

The physical layout of Bad Bear is such that rehabilitation of the site to modern standards will greatly improve its appeal to campers and reduce its impact on the riparian area by concentrating the camp units into a more compact area, while providing more suitable facilities.

TEN MILE CAMPGROUND

Ten Mile Campground is located approximately one mile below Bad Bear Campground. Ten Mile contains 14 camp units and is located in much the same type of setting as Bad Bear. The site is poorly designed for today's campers but is heavily used. Like Bad Bear, rehabilitation of the site could reduce impacts on the vegetation and improve service to campers.

HAYFORK CAMPGROUND

Hayfork Campground is also located in the riparian area and like the other campgrounds on highway 21 is poorly designed for today's campers. The small (only 6 unit) campground has an exceedingly long access road that is continually sloughing material onto the road and then into Mores Creek. The entire Campground is within sight of the Highway and subjects the campers to the full effect of the road noise while detracting from the natural aspect of the scenery as seen from the Highway.

EDNA CREEK CAMPGROUND

While not located directly on Highway 21, Edna Creek Campground is less than one-fourth mile up the Willow Creek road and should be considered as part of the highway corridor. The campground is small and poorly designed for current users like so many of the others on the district, but the location off the highway is appealing to many. The Crooked River trail begins approximately one mile further up the Willow Creek road and should be considered a potential asset to the campground.

Even though this site has limited potential for expansion and is farthest away from the district office (of the Highway 21 sites), it appears to be heavily used. If this site is to be retained it should be redesigned to modern standards and a vegetative management plan implemented.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKI AREAS

Whoop-um-up, Goldfork, and Banner Ridge Park and Ski areas are all relatively heavily used in the winter. The state Department of Recreation's program to plow the parking and groom the trails is a welcome asset to the district's recreation portfolio. This program is well established and only needs to be refined and expanded.

The Banner Ridge and Goldfork Park and Ski Areas are wide spaces on the road in the summer. The heavily used winter-time ski trails are, like hundreds of other miles of logging roads through out the district, mere logging roads in the summer.

The Whoop-um-up parking area is a dispersed recreation parking area in the summer. The single unit vault toilet was built primarily for winter use and its presence on the edge of what is often used as a logging deck in the summer would be viewed as an anomaly by a recreation planner unfamiliar with the area.

HIGHWAY 21 CORRIDOR

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of the Strategic Recreation Management Considerations (Table 1, Page 6) will provide general guidelines within which to evaluate the specific situations detailed above in the Current Conditions section. The Forest Service's goals of resource protection and operational efficiency can be addressed relatively easily with three recommendations: rehabilitate, restrict, and modify. Fulfilling the other strategic goals will be more difficult and will have to be discussed at some length.

To reduce resource damage and improve management efficiency the following actions are recommended:

* Rehabilitate the following developed sites:
  - Grayback Gulch Campground
  - Bad Bear Campground
  - Ten Mile Campground
  - Edna Creek Campground
* Restrict dispersed camping along Highway 21
* Modify Hayfork Campground into a small group reservation site.

Rehabilitation of the existing sites will simultaneously make the sites more appealing and cheaper to maintain. Modern site design will suit today's style of camping equipment and reduce damage to vegetation. Proper traffic control (both foot and auto) within the campgrounds will reduce boundary disputes among campers and project a well-managed appearance.

Restricting camping within 1/4 mile of the highway to only developed sites will greatly improve the appearance of the corridor, reduce riparian zone damage, and increase the chances of viewing wildlife from the road. Restricting roadside activities to day use only will eliminate that cluttered look that detracts from the travelers recreation experience. (Dispersed campers will have to travel 1/4 mile or more up one of the side roads to pitch camp and will thus be out of sight of the road.) Campfires, garbage, and vegetation damage caused by overnighters seeking to get close to the river or away from the road will be eliminated. Judicious use of unobtrusive signs and barrier rocks will discourage day-user's vehicles from unduly impacting the riparian vegetation.

Modification of Hayfork Campground into a small group (10-50 occupants) reservation site will reduce the number of recreation maintenance stops necessary along Highway 21. Stops will only be necessary during the reservation periods. This modification will also provide for the known demand for a group reservation area that is currently occurring uncontroled in the family campgrounds.

Recommendations to protect the basic resources and improve management efficiency are the obvious ones to make, less obvious are recommendations to attain the other strategic goals listed in Table 1, page 6.

As far as the Highway 21 corridor is concerned, the emphasis to support the local economy is probably the most critical. Without a viable local and state economy almost all other multiple-use management goals become harder to accomplish. It is therefore recommended that the Idaho City Ranger District adopt an active "Good Neighbor" recreation resource management policy. Instead of passively letting things happen, the Forest Service should take positive action to improve conditions along the Highway 21 corridor. Just as the Forest Service has traditionally taken active steps to reduce forest fire danger through fuel abatement measures, public education activities, and early detection practices; the Forest Service should also take positive steps to support the local economy by identifying recreation opportunities, encouraging community involvement, and educating the public about the environment along the corridor.

The goal of the Good Neighbor policy should be to help Idaho City become a destination area for recreationists traveling along Highway 21. This goal will be accomplished by actively working to restore existing resource damage and by actively seeking ways to improve recreation opportunities.

Good Neighbor Recommendations (Summer)
- Develop loop trails out of developed sites.
- Improve fish habitat in Mores Creek and Crooked River
- Establish wildlife habitat areas near Idaho City
- Develop conceptual plans for campground at Granite Creek
- Develop vegetative management plan for riparian zone
- Aggressively develop district-wide Recreation Opportunity Guides, consolidated information about recreation in the area
- Develop visual management plan
- Develop and implement interpretive activities

Winter Recommendations
- Expand cross-country ski trails within corridor
- Develop conceptual plans for more parking areas
- Develop snowmobile trail networks
- Aggressively develop winter ROG's

One of the main objectives of the Good Neighbor Recommendations should be to improve the visual impact of the Idaho City area. Management should strive to create a pleasing forest environment by devising an aggressive recreation management philosophy that cooperates with the private sector economy in developing a strong recreation infrastructure. If Idaho City is going to reach that critical mass of recreational opportunity necessary to induce recreationists to think of it as a nice place in which to recreate, it is going to have to look nice and have a wide variety of things to do.

Concurrently with implementing the short-range recommendations above, the Forest Service should begin implementing the long-range goals of the Good Neighbor recommendations. Development of a short nature trail at the Airport and a somewhat longer loop trail at Bad Bear and/or the proposed Granite Creek Campground would give recreationists something extra to do when they are in the area. Fish habitat improvement projects on Mores Creek and the upper portion of Crooked River would provide easily accessible recreation opportunities for anglers interested in something less strenuous than a backpack trip into the wilderness. Rehabilitation of the 70 acres of mining spoil piles between Idaho City and Granite Creek would greatly improve the neglected, wasteland character of the area. Good neighbors do not let their yards grow up in weeds or get cluttered with trash. The Forest Service should declare the wetland areas among the spoil piles to be important (local) wildlife habitat and begin managing it as such. Prudent use of fencing and signs would greatly improve its image as useful land (land with a purpose, not just left over mining residue). Development of a 25 or 50 unit campground among the spoil piles at Granite Creek has the potential to offer a truly unique recreational experience combining history, wildlife, and fish. Development of these projects would give recreationists more reasons to stop over in the Idaho City area (improve the recreation infrastructure). To ensure that potential visitors knew of these opportunities , recreation opportunity guides,(ROG's) should be printed and distributed to all interested parties. The Forest Service should also make full use of good signing techniques along the highway and keep the visitor center fully informed of recreational opportunities.

All of these Good Neighbor recommendations have an element of resource protection built into them, but the recommendation to develop a vegetative management plan for the riparian zone is vital. It is impossible to over-stress the importance of the riparian vegetation in this climate. The fact of the highway and the private land development along Mores Creek only increases the value of the riparian areas on the National Forest. Methods of public education must be improved. The Granite Creek Riparian Demonstration Project and the Highway 21 corridor represent an enormous challenge to the resource management skills of the Forest Service. It must be met with imagination and determination and it must be met in a way that invites people to enjoy the area.

The summer season is important and there is some activity associated with the fall hunting season, but spring is simply a mess, so over-the-snow recreational activities take on extra importance. The Good Neighbor recommendations demand that the Forest Service work closely with the State Department of Recreation to refine and expand the winter sports opportunities in the Idaho City area. Because travel is difficult in the winter the proximity of Boise takes on added significance.

Cold weather and the physical exertion of snowmobiling or cross-country skiing make Warm Springs Resort and the motels of Idaho City valuable cogs in the recreation engine. Better parking, more trails, and more publicity (ROG's) would greatly increase the desirability of the Idaho City area as a one day or a whole weekend winter recreation area.

CONCLUSION

The Idaho City District has many opportunities to improve its operational efficiency and increase the level of service provided to National Forest visitors. Some suggested changes can be carried out almost immediately, others require more refinement and, therefore, longer time frames; still other suggestions are long-term projects by their very nature, but the one characteristic they all have in common is that they all require action. None of the recommendations in this report will happen without a conscious decision to implement them. The Forest Service must make a decision concerning recreation management on the district, because more of the same will merely allow the existing trends to intensify and continue moving in an uncontroled direction.

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APPENDIX A

A Process For Analyzing Future Management Of Public Sector Developed Sites On The Boise National Forest

Draft

DRAFT

A PROCESS FOR ANALYZING FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR DEVELOPED SITES ON THE BOISE NATIONAL FOREST

The objective of this rating system is to provide Forest direction on the following four management concerns.

1. Which public sector developed sites, excluding Administrative Headquarters sites, should be closed to public use or converted to dispersed sites?

2. Which public sector developed sites should remain open to public use and what level of service should be provided at these sites? (i.e., standard, less than standard, or self service)

3. Which campgrounds should be under the charge system?

4. What are the Capital Investment priorities for the public sector sites which will remain open to public use?

PROPOSED POLICY FOR MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR DEVELOPED SITES BOISE NATIONAL FOREST

Manage every developed site at a standard level of service (operable, safe, and sanitary) during the managed use season. If budget or other constraints limit our ability to provide this service, we will first explore opportunities to overcome these constraints, and secondly to either reduce the level of site development or close all or portions of the site on a temporary or permanent basis.

Opportunities to increase cost-effectiveness:

Attract more customers by better meeting their needs.

-- Target user groups by providing barrier-free access, livestock facilities, oversized RV spurs, etc.

Improve our marketing.

-- Target specific user groups.

Reduce our costs.

-- Recruit volunteers--campground hosts, Adopt-a-Campground partnerships, volunteers in-lieu of fees.

-- Minimize vandalism expenses--vandal-proof designs; hosts; donation plaques, etc. to encourage "ownership."

-- Temporarily or permanently close units, spurs, or sites.

-- Shorten the managed season of use.

-- Reduce level of service outside of managed season from standard to less-than-standard.

DRAFT

Increase fee charges.

-- Reassess current fees in view of changed amenities, competition with local private industry.

-- Convert multiple single units to group reservation sites where appropriate.

Increase fee collections.

-- Provide internal budget incentive by distributing a portion of the District recreation budgets proportionate to fees collected.

-- Suggest voluntary contributions at non-fee sites.

-- Lengthen the managed season for free collections (charging fees appropriate to the level of service provided.

-- Increase likelihood of collections by increased law enforcement efforts, on site hosts, media publicity.

Better manage occupancy.

-- Fully utilize the "reservation system."

Increase the number of fee sites.

-- Assess opportunities to convert non-fee sites into fee sites, including established campgrounds, boat-launching ramps, or sites with managed parking.

CRITERIA RATING SYSTEM

Site camping capacity:

50+ paots	10 points
25---50	8 points
<25	0 points

Revenues generated (or capacity to generate revenues with changes):

7000+ dollars	10 points
3000-7000	8 points
1000-3000	5 points
250-1000	3 points
<250	0 points

DRAFT

Expansion capability (Is site capable of accommodating increased expansion?)

Capable of significant expansion	10 points
Capable of minor expansion	5 points
Capable of no expansion	0 points

Site use--managed use season:

>80% capacity	10 points
60----80%	8 points
40----60%	5 points
20----40%	3 points
<20%	0 points

Site facility condition:

Meets standard	10 points
Requires light maintenance	5 points
Requires heavy maintenance	0 points

Administrative travel distance (distance from other high point site or frequently travelled Forest Service recreation route):

<1 mile	10 points
1----5 miles	7 points
5---15 miles	4 points
>15 miles	0 points

Site amenities:

Drinking water	5 points
Hot springs	5 points
Swimming beach	5 points
Boat launch	5 points
Near Boise	4 points
Barrier-free	4 points
Horse facilities	4 points
Paved highway	3 points
Garbage disposal	3 points
Floatable river	3 points
Lake	3 points
Privacy/screening	3 points
Interpretive site	3 points
OHV site	2 points
Trailhead	2 points
Other organized values	?

DRAFT

Impact on other resources (would conversion or closure result in unacceptable impact on water, soil, or vegetation?):

high impact	10 points
moderate impact	5 points
low impact	0 points

Decision Matrix:

50+ points total	keep
35---50	upgrade, implement, etc.
<35	close

The following chart was prepared to define various levels of amenities:

AMENITY	DEVELOPED SITES			DISPERSED SITES	
	FEE CG	NON-FEE CG	OTHER	IMPROVED	OTHER
Toilet	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	No
Tables	Yes	Yes	?	?	No
Grill/ Fire Ring	Yes	Yes	?	?	No
Parking/ Spurs	Yes	Yes	?	?	?
Traffic Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	?
Water	Yes	?	?	No	No
Garbage	Yes	?	?	No	No
Signing	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	?
Routine	Yes	?	?	?	?

APPENDIX B

Rating Of Developed Sites

Idaho City Ranger District

FACILITY	# OF UNITS	SCORE (*)	NO CHANGE	CLOSE	POTENTIAL EXPAND
Gray Back Gulch	14	87	14		
Bad Bear	6	56	6		6
Ten Mile	14	55	14		
Black Rock	11	52	11		2
Edna Creek	9	48	9		8
Robert E. Lee	6	48	6		
Hayfork	6	44	6		(R)
Four Mile	5	38		-5	
Deer Park	3	35		-3	
Johnson Creek	3	25		-3	
Bald Mountain	4	25		-4	
Willow Creek	4	22		-4	
Graham Bridge	4	20		-4	
TOTALS	89		66	23	16

Results in 26% Reduction in Units with no Expansion and 8% Reduction with Expansion.

(*) Using a Process for Analyzing Future Management of Public Sites on the Boise National Forest (Appendix A)

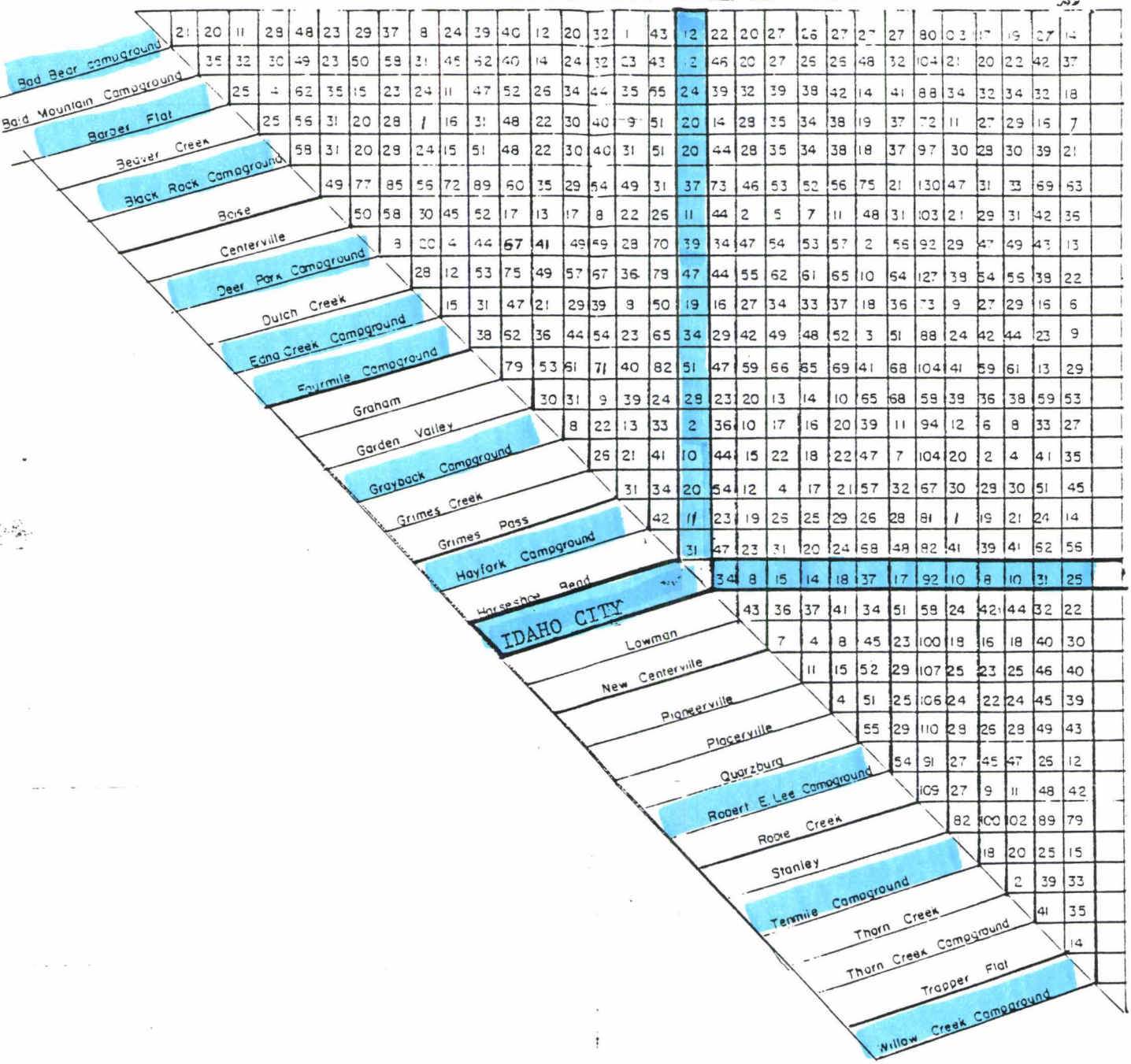
(R) Redesignate as a group reservation site for groups from 10-50 people.

APPENDIX C

Idaho City Ranger District

Map of Recreation Analysis Area

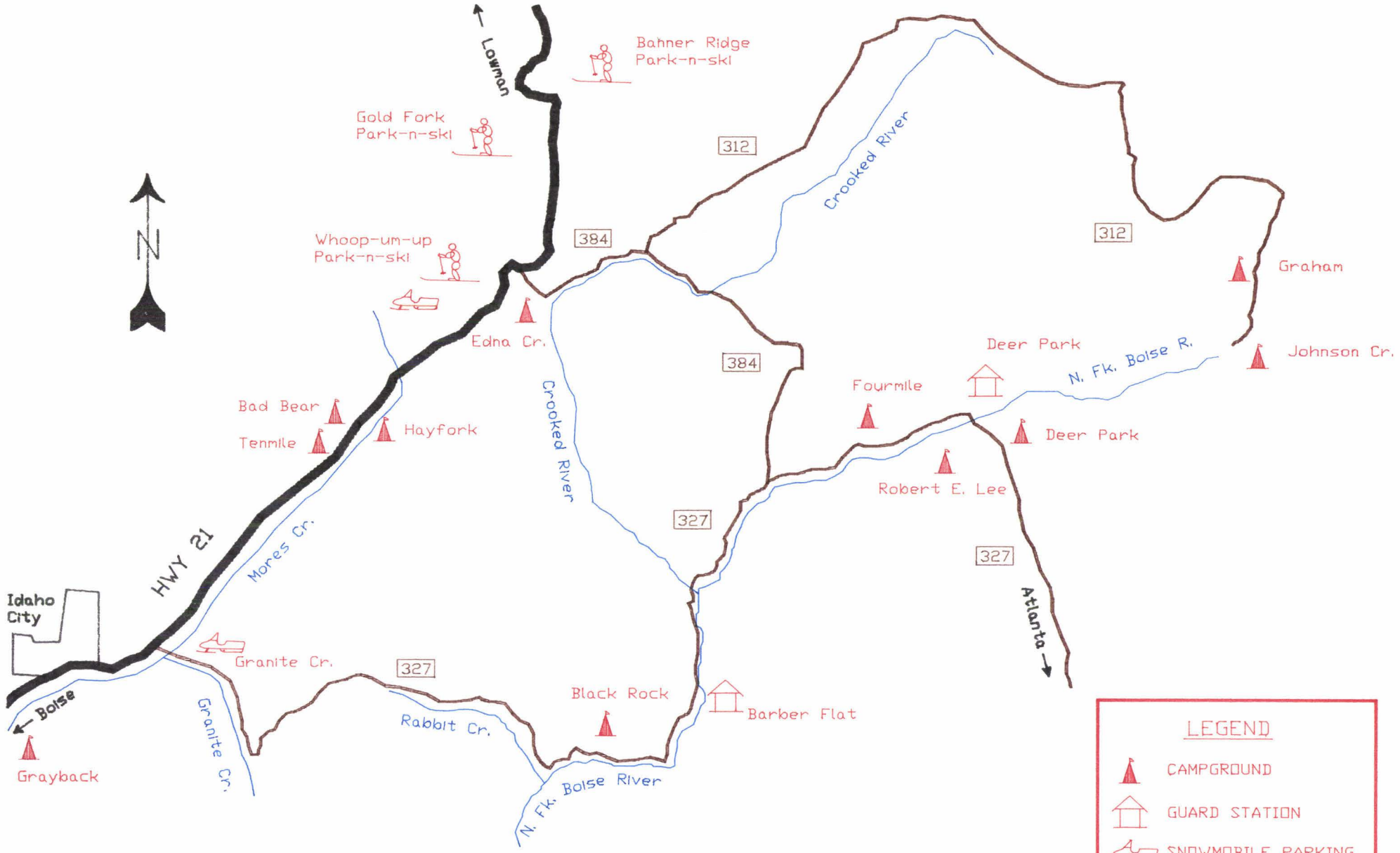
IDAHO CITY MILEAGE CHART



APPENDIX D

Idaho City Ranger District

Milage Chart



IDAHO CITY RANGER DISTRICT

RECREATION ANALYSIS AREA